welfare of old, aged and destitute women;

(b) if so, what are the details of such programme; and

(c) if reply to part (b) above be in the negative, whether Government would consider the desirability of a programme to be launched for the welfare of old, aged and destitute women in future?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF WELFARE (SHRIMATI SUMATI ORAON): (a) No new programme for welfare of the old, aged and destitute women has been launched. Assistance is being provided through old age pensions by the States. Besides, the Government of India has been providing grants-in-aid on a limited scale to voluntary organisatons for Welfare of the aged under the 'General Grant-in-Aid Scheme for Assistance to Voluntary Organisations in the Field of Social Welfare'.

(b) Grants-in-aid being provided to voluntary organisations for various specialised activities, such as maintenance, recreation, Day Care Centre, health check-up etc.

(c) Question does not arise.

Canadian Co-operations for Urban Mass Transit System

436. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL: Will the Minister of URBAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether a high level Indian delegation had discussion with the Canadian Government in connection with the Urban Mass Transit system in Canada during January, 1989;

(b) if so, the outcome thereof;

(c) whether any final negotiation in the field of providing technical and financial cooperation has been held; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI DALBIR SINGH): (a) to (d) In pursuance to the visit of a Canadian delegation, headed by the Canadian Transport Minister, in 1988, an invitation was extended by the Canadian Government to the Urban Development Minister to lead a delegation to that country to study Canada's urban transport systems for possible application in India. No formal agreement was concluded with Canadian Government during the visit.

Improvement in capacity utilisation of Fertilizer Plants

437. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have urged to the fertilizers industry to improve the capacity utilisation of the existing plants:

(b) if so, the quantum of fertilizers produced by each of the industry in the Public Sector during the last three years:

(c) whether import of fertilizers have since been declined during the past few years; and

(d) if not, the steps propose to be taken to boost the production of fertilizers in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FERTILIZERS IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI R. PRABHU): (a) It is Government's constant endeavour to improve the capacity utilisation of the existing fertiliser plants.

(b) The production of fertilisers by each of the fertilizer manufacturing units in the public sector during the

ast three years is given in the ttached statement.

See Appendix CXLIX, Annexure No. 14].

(c) Yes, Sir. The import of fertilizers has substantially declined from bout 34 lakh tonnes of nutrients in 985-86 to about 10 lakh tonnes in 987-88.

(d) Does not arise.

Directions to States to keep close watch on the price situation

438. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have directed all States and Union Territories to keep a close watch on the price situation;

(b) whether the prices of all commodities like pulses, vegetables and other common household items are sharply increasing despite directions by Government; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor and steps Government propose to take to bring prices of essential commodities in control?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI D. L. BAITHA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There has been increase in the prices of pulses (except Arhar), wheat, jowar, tea and milk during the current financial year 1988-89 till 4-2-1989. In the case of vegetables, the price of potatoes was marginaliy higher but that of onions was substantially lower. The WPI of edible oils except vanaspati was lower during the current financial year, while WPI of sugar and gur were higher.

(c) The reasons for rise in prices in the case of pulses is attributed to stagnant production in the last few years and also due to the increase in the import duty on pulses in October, 1988. The prices of vegetables and edible oils are lower because of increased production of oilseeds, vegetables in general and seasonality factors. The main thrust of the Government policy is to increase the production of essential commodities which are in short supply and to import items to augment the domestic availability. The Government is continuously keeping a close watch on the behaviour of prices and availability of essential commodities and appropriate remedial measures are taken to contain any undue rise in prices. Public Distribution System has been strengthened and more fair price shops have been opened in far-flung and remote areas. Mobile Vans have been pressed into service for distribution of esential items in remote and unserved areas. State Governments have been advised to set up control rooms to keep a continuous watch on the prices and availability of essential commodities. Vigilance Committees have been set up at district levels to ensure smooth functioning of Public Distribution System. The State Governments have also been urged to take stringent actions against hoarders, black-marketeers and anti-social elements under Essential Commodities Act and similar other legislations.

ILO's Offer for more employment in Rural Areas

439 SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether the International Labour Organisation has offered technical expertise to India for exploring the possibility of generating more employment in rural areas;

(b) if so, whether Government have since accepted the offer of the ILO; and